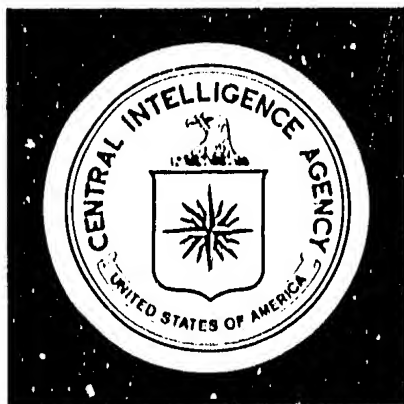


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# Intelligence Report

## *The Soviet Military Presence in Egypt*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

February 1975

THE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE IN EGYPT

NOTE

This report was prepared by the Office of Political Research at the direction of the Deputy Director for Intelligence, in response to a request by the Secretary of Defense for an examination of the background, current status, and prospects of the Soviet military presence in Egypt. The findings of the report emphasize the close dependence of the Soviet military presence upon the changing fortunes of the Soviet-Egyptian political relationship.

In the preparation of this paper, OPR received major assistance from the Office of Strategic Research, and valuable comments and suggestions from the Office of Current Intelligence. The Defense Intelligence Agency has reviewed the draft, and has no major differences of view; however, the responsibility for the judgments of the report remains that of CIA. Further comments will be welcomed by the principal OPR officer involved, [redacted] or by the principal OSR contributor, [redacted]

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## PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

The Soviet military presence in Egypt has always been closely dependent upon the Soviet political base. That presence has fluctuated considerably over the years with the Egyptian government's rapidly changing view of its needs and degree of satisfaction with Soviet military services to Egypt. The prospects for the Soviet presence remain hostage to this highly volatile political relationship.

### Past and Present Soviet Military Advantages

The primary military advantage Moscow now enjoys in Egypt is the use of the Egyptian ports of Alexandria and Mersa Matruh to support Soviet naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean. The Soviet Union has in the past enjoyed two other major benefits for operations against the Sixth Fleet:

- Between 1968 and 1972, the Soviets maintained a naval air unit in Egypt which gave the USSR its first land-based air capability in the Mediterranean.
- Between 1970 and 1972, the Soviets were developing an extensive deep water facility at Mersa Matruh controlled by the Soviet Navy and for its exclusive use.

All three benefits were granted by Egypt to the USSR as recompense for Soviet services—first in reequipping and retaining the Egyptian armed forces after the 1967 defeat, and then in responding to Nasser's 1970 appeal for installation of a Soviet-manned air defense system in Egypt to halt Israeli raids against Egyptian cities.

Despite these past services, Soviet-Egyptian frictions after Nasser's death produced an abrupt reduction in the Soviet presence.

- On Sadat's orders in July 1972, the 6,600 Soviet air defense combat personnel in Egypt were entirely withdrawn, the 5,500 Soviets providing support and advisory services were reduced to about 200, and the total of all Soviet military personnel in Egypt dropped from a peak of nearly 15,000 in 1971 to less than a thousand. This spectacular change was humiliating to the Soviet Union and politically harmful to the Soviet position in the Middle East.

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- More important for Soviet military capabilities against the Sixth Fleet, Sadat simultaneously ordered the Soviet naval air unit out of the country and deprived the USSR of its exclusive facility at Mersa Matruh, while allowing Soviet naval vessels to continue to use the services of Egyptian ports.

The Soviet-Egyptian political tensions which produced these changes have not disappeared.

- The Egyptians have chafed at what they have seen as Soviet overbearing ways and aspirations for extraterritorial rights. Sadat has above all resented repeated Soviet delays or renegeing on commitments to deliver certain weapon systems, and in 1972 and 1973 he was angered by the conviction that Soviet dealings with the US were inhibiting Soviet willingness to support Egypt.
- The Soviets in turn have resented Egyptian ingratitude for past services and have been alarmed at the post-Nasser trend toward the right in Egyptian political and economic life. In 1974, Moscow was particularly chagrined over Sadat's turn away from the USSR in favor of dealings with the US and closer reliance upon the conservative Arab states, as he sought both US aid in obtaining Israeli concessions and sources of economic and military aid alternative to the Soviet Union.

#### Soviet Military Concerns and Desires

The Soviets today have both specific concerns and particular ambitions regarding their military presence in Egypt.

- The most important concern is over the preservation of the current Soviet naval right to use Egyptian ports. While the Soviets have a contractual agreement with Egypt for use of these facilities, Sadat has nevertheless several times raised direct or indirect threats to the port rights as a means of pressuring the USSR to fulfill arms supply agreements.

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- The Soviets would probably regard loss of the use of Egyptian ports as a considerable inconvenience to their Mediterranean operations. The Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartus, also used by the Soviet Navy, would offer a partial substitute, but would not serve Soviet needs as adequately, particularly over the near term.

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- A second and less urgent concern exists regarding the conditions of Soviet naval use of a reopened Suez Canal. The Soviets probably do not believe that even in a new major Soviet-Egyptian political crisis Sadat would dare to deny them use of the canal. But Moscow is aware that there are various delays and difficulties which Cairo could create, short of outright blocking of Soviet passage. The Soviets would probably welcome some formal assurances from Egypt on this score. Beyond this, they would of course hope for preferential treatment for their vessels over those of the US and NATO, but they would not expect this unless present political conditions change greatly.

In addition, there are undoubtedly military benefits in Egypt which the Soviets would like to regain or acquire if their political relationship with Cairo ever permitted this.

- Near the top of the list would be restoration of the Egypt-based naval air unit. Since its departure, the important gap represented by the lack of adequate air support for Soviet naval units deployed opposite the Sixth Fleet has not been filled.
- There is some evidence to suggest that the Soviets also continue to long for restoration of the facility they were at one time developing at Mersa Matruh for the exclusive use of the Soviet Navy.

### Contingencies Affecting the Future Soviet Presence

Tensions in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship are such that the chance of Egyptian acceptance of any proposals for an expanded Soviet presence are presently quite small. The Soviets are well aware of this. These odds would improve for the USSR in the event of Egyptian involvement in a new war with Israel, particularly if it led to an Egyptian defeat. In the latter case, circumstances could emerge in which the Egyptian need for Soviet help would become so grave as to induce Sadat to accept, or even to request, additional Soviet forces and facilities in Egypt.

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that Sadat's ability to fend off any future Soviet pressures for an increased presence would be further strengthened if a significant additional Israeli Sinai withdrawal could be arranged, and the Suez Canal meanwhile reopened. This would satisfy the most essential Egyptian war aims and increase Egyptian incentives to try to remain out of any future Middle East fighting, while reducing Egyptian dependence on prospective Soviet

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help. There is strong evidence that Sadat's preference is to minimize such dependence on the USSR so far as his political needs permit.

In the absence of a new war, there is some chance that another crisis in Soviet-Egyptian relations, possibly induced by further Soviet reneging on promised arms shipments, could lead Sadat to take sudden action to deny Soviet naval units use of Egyptian ports. Recently Sadat has personally alluded in public to the possibility of abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty, an act which would probably presage action against Soviet port rights. We estimate the chance of such drastic Sadat action over the next twelve months to be on the order of one in three, which is somewhat greater than the chance of his giving the USSR an increased presence.

On balance, over the next year the chances seem somewhat better than even that there will be neither an improvement nor a further reduction in the Soviet military presence in Egypt. This is largely because both leaderships still have important reasons to try to keep their ongoing disagreements from escalating to the breaking point.

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## DISCUSSION

## I. POLITICAL PREREQUISITES AND MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

The Soviet military presence in Egypt has always been closely dependent upon the evolving Soviet political relationship with Cairo, and over the years has reflected the changing fortunes of a marriage of convenience. Both Soviet military help to the Egyptians and Soviet military rights in Egypt have fluctuated over time in response to each side's current view of its interests.

— For its part, Moscow has always measured Egyptian demands—for Soviet arms, Soviet services, and Soviet risk-taking—against an expected payoff for Soviet political influence and policies in the Middle East and for the local Soviet military position vis-a-vis the US and NATO.

— On the other hand, Cairo has always weighed the military and political concessions Moscow has sought against the concrete benefits the Soviets have been willing to deliver and the gravity of current Egyptian needs.

## A. Laying the Groundwork

Thus far, this relationship has passed through three phases:

*Between 1955 and 1967*, the groundwork was laid for the specific military advantages the USSR later received. Soviet and East European weapons shipments, economic assistance, and political encouragement were highly useful to Nasser in his efforts to oust Western influence from the Arab world and to assert leadership over radical Arab forces in their struggle against Arab conservatives and Israel. In return, despite occasional important policy differences between Cairo and Moscow, the USSR cemented its position as the principal supporter of Egypt and the Arab cause and the indispensable source of the weaponry Nasser needed

to confront Israel. Meanwhile, the military aid technicians sent to the UAR to instruct Egyptians in the use of Soviet weapons and equipment established a precedent for the much greater Soviet presence to follow.

## B. The Dividends Extracted in 1967

*Between 1967 and 1970*, the USSR drew major strategic dividends from this earlier investment, and there was a rapid expansion of the Soviet military presence in Egypt. As a result of the UAR's humiliation in the June 1967 war, Egypt was linked to the USSR by new bonds of necessity. Only the Soviets could furnish essential diplomatic support, could reequip and retrain the Egyptian armed forces, and could furnish effective help of their own when Nasser's renewed confrontation with Israel got him into new difficulties.

The trend toward more direct Soviet participation in the Egyptian struggle with Israel in turn furnished a pretext for the Soviets to use part of their military presence for purposes which had much more to do with Soviet military interests, both nuclear-strategic and regional, than with Egyptian security interests. Premier Kosygin alluded to this fact in conversation with a foreign statesman in June 1968, asserting that the real victors in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war had been the Soviets, because the conflict had enabled them to transfer more naval units to the Mediterranean and to build up a presence there in such circumstances that no Arab could object.

The growing Soviet squadron in the eastern Mediterranean may thus have been portrayed to the Arabs as deterring US naval forces from attack on the Arab states, but the Soviets in fact were primarily concerned with creating a capability to neutralize those forces in the event of a Soviet war with the US. The presence of Soviet naval units

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in three Egyptian ports after 1967 may possibly have been initially envisaged by Egypt as a deterrent against Israeli attacks on those ports, but much more important for the USSR was the use of the ports to support the Soviets' own interest in challenging the strategic mission of the Sixth Fleet. Similarly, the USSR's use of Egyptian territory after 1968 to create a land-based reconnaissance and air strike capability against the Sixth Fleet was another Soviet military benefit obtained in payment for the services being rendered to Egypt.

### C. The 1970 Intervention: Risks, Rewards, and Later Costs

On the other hand, to keep these advantages Moscow was henceforth under continual pressure to satisfy Egyptian growing demands for military assistance. At the outset, this involved the rapid and large-scale reequipment of the Egyptian armed forces after the 1967 war and the dispatch of increasing numbers of Soviet advisers to oversee the rebuilding of the Egyptian military capability. The Soviets assumed a more direct role and greater risks, however, after Nasser began a war of attrition against Israel in 1969 and Israel responded with deep-penetration air strikes against Egyptian cities. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Brezhnev did endorse the sending of Soviet combat units to defend Egyptian air space, including SAM brigades and MiG-21 squadrons, accompanied by large numbers of Soviet advisers and technicians to handle an increased flow of air defense equipment. This Soviet intervention succeeded in neutralizing the Israeli air campaign. In view of the growing risks of escalation, however, the Soviet leaders welcomed the August 1970 ceasefire which interrupted a trend of increasing Soviet direct combat with the Israelis.

As a result of Soviet acceptance of this new role in defense of Egypt in 1970, Soviet military personnel in Egypt rose from an estimated 4,000 troops in early 1970 to an all-time peak of nearly 15,000 by the middle of 1971. [REDACTED] This multiplication of the Soviet military presence increased both the Soviet stake in Egyptian military fortunes and the Egyptian sense of dependence on the USSR. At the same time, the Egyptians granted the USSR some additional advantages for operations against the Sixth Fleet which may conceivably have been Nasser's quid pro quo for the Soviet assumption of additional responsibilities and risks. Thus, it was in mid-1970, shortly after the Soviet air defense forces had arrived, that the Soviet Union began to move beyond its existing use of Egyptian ports, and was allowed to start development of facilities at Mersa Matruh for the exclusive use of the Soviet Navy. It will be seen in Part II that during 1970 and 1971 the Soviets also considerably expanded and diversified their Egypt-based naval air operations against the Sixth Fleet, which had not changed since 1968. One may speculate that this may similarly have represented new Egyptian recompense for the new Soviet air defense services to Cairo.

On the other hand, subsequent events demonstrated that the great enlargement of the Soviet presence and facilities in Egypt after early 1970 carried with it an equally great political handicap. The new Soviet presence created growing resentment of what many Egyptians saw as Soviet overbearing ways and intolerable extraterritorial rights. The growth of nationalist sentiment in the Egyptian army and government, impatient with Soviet tutelage, took on new impetus after Nasser's death in September 1970 brought more conservative forces to power in Cairo, and was further reinforced by the subsequent Soviet frictions with Sadat discussed below. All of these factors fed Cairo's desire to reduce Egyptian dependence on the USSR by cutting back the Soviet military presence as soon as Egypt's most pressing needs in the confrontation with Israel permitted—in practice, as soon as the Egyptians had sufficiently learned to man an air defense network. Since the Soviets at no point had political control of the Egyptian government,

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they could not prevent this change from being carried out.

#### D. The Contraction of the Soviet Position

Throughout the most recent stage, *from 1971 to the present*, there has been a long-term trend, with some ups and downs, toward a cooling of relations between Cairo and Moscow. In July 1972, this erosion of the Soviet political base in Egypt resulted in a large-scale forced cutback in the Soviet military presence. This involved not only the expulsion of most Soviet advisers, but the elimination of two specific Soviet military advantages—the land-based naval air unit, and the exclusive Soviet facilities under construction at Mersa Matruh. As noted in Part III, since 1972 there have been further sporadic direct and indirect Egyptian political threats to the primary remaining Soviet military advantage, the continuing naval use of Egyptian ports.

After Nasser's death, the Soviets had feared such an evolution of Egyptian policy, and sought to prevent it by concluding a Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty with his successor Sadat in 1971. This treaty, however, has not prevented the persistent growth of tension and recurrent crises between the two states. Since his advent to power, Sadat has above all resented repeated Soviet delays or reneging on commitments to deliver certain weapon systems, and in 1972 and 1973 he was angered by the conviction that Soviet dealings with the United States were inhibiting Soviet willingness to support Egypt.

The Soviets, for their part, have become increasingly concerned over what they have seen as a rightist trend, hostile to their interests, unfolding in Egyptian domestic political and economic life since 1971. The Soviets have also greatly resented Egyptian ingratitude for the various risks the Soviet Union had accepted, the essential military hardware actually sent to Egypt in the past, and the many vital Soviet services to Egypt rendered during the October 1973 war. Finally, in the wake of the October war, the Soviets were particularly chagrined over Sadat's turn away from the USSR in favor of dealings with the US and closer reliance

upon the conservative Arab states, seeking both US aid in obtaining Israeli concessions and sources of economic and military aid alternative to the Soviet Union.

One result thus far of this interaction from 1971 to date has been to confirm Moscow in its policy of doling out the weapons most coveted by Sadat sparingly and with great delays and omissions—pending an improvement in Sadat's behavior toward the Soviet Union.

In turn, Sadat's resentment of the Soviet attitude has served to reinforce his resistance to Soviet pressures. Among other things, he has thus far remained determined to reject any pressures to enlarge again the Soviet military presence in Egypt, whether through a return of Soviet advisers or in other ways.

After a more detailed examination of the rise and decline of the Soviet military presence in Part II, the factors affecting the prospects for expansion or further contraction of that presence will be weighed in Part III.

## II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE

### A. Growth of Soviet Naval Use of Egyptian Facilities (1967-1972)

Prior to mid-1967, the Soviets had limited access to facilities in Egypt, although Soviet ships conducted frequent port calls there. The Soviet naval force in the Mediterranean was small, and ships normally deployed for less than two months, spending about half of this time at anchor. Thus, there was little need for routine access to Egyptian facilities.

#### 1. Soviet Use of Egyptian Ports and Anchorages

After the June 1967 war, as the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron grew and the duration of the deployments of its ships increased in length, Egyptian anchorages and shore facilities began to play a greater role in the operations of the Squadron. Two anchorages in Egyptian waters—Sollun and

Mersa Matruh—were established to support Soviet submarines and surface ships. The Soviets built "floating bases" composed of groupings of merchant tankers and naval auxiliaries in these areas, which became a primary source of support for the Mediterranean Squadron.\* Sollum was frequently used by submarines for mid-patrol support and replenishment, and the Mersa Matruh anchorage was used periodically by surface combatants. In March 1968, Moscow supplemented these floating bases by concluding agreements with Egypt to permit routine access to some Egyptian ports by Soviet naval forces. In 1970 the Soviets also began to develop a new port at Mersa Matruh with facilities exclusively for their own use.

*Alexandria.* The facilities at Alexandria provided the Mediterranean Squadron with support services similar to those of a Soviet base. This was not a "Soviet naval base" in the conventional sense, however, because the Egyptians still retained overall control of the facilities.

The agreement with Egypt nevertheless gave the Soviets managerial control of the El Gabbari Shipyard at Alexandria. All key personnel in the shipyard—an estimated 350 to 400 persons—were Soviet nationals and were under the supervision of a Soviet admiral. The facilities at El Gabbari were capable of performing repairs of conventional submarines and surface ships up to destroyer size. The Soviets used this facility to perform overhauls of some of their F class diesel submarines and routine maintenance on smaller combatants.

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Spare parts, ammunition, POL, and food stores were also maintained in Alexandria, and Soviet auxiliaries moored in the harbor were used to provide logistic support as well as to provide some routine maintenance and repair. Alexandria was the main port providing mid-patrol support to diesel submarines in the Mediterranean. Except for one instance in 1969, nuclear submarines did not use the port but were supported at the Sollum anchorage by auxiliaries operating out of Alexandria.

\*The Soviets also continued to make regular use of anchorages in international waters elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean.

*Port Said.* The Soviets used Port Said as an anchorage, for POL storage, and for billeting of personnel attached to the amphibious group that was almost always present. This group usually consisted of a destroyer, a tank landing ship, and two medium landing ships. The group was believed to have about 250 troops embarked.

*Mersa Matruh.* By mid-1970 there was a continuous Soviet naval presence—usually two or three auxiliaries and a minesweeper—at Mersa Matruh, and at about this time the Soviets began to develop there a deep water facility for the exclusive use of the Soviet Navy. Port development activities included dredging operations and the installation of quays and floating piers. Other construction in the immediate vicinity included barracks, several support buildings, and a recreation area. Soviet F and W class submarines and associated support ships began to be observed at Matruh's floating piers in 1970 and 1971, suggesting that the Soviets may have intended to shift their support of diesel submarines from Alexandria to the more secluded facilities at Matruh, less vulnerable to Israeli attack.

## 2. Soviet Naval Air Operations in Egypt

Soviet naval air operations based in Egypt began in early 1968

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By 1972, a total of 36 aircraft were assigned to the Soviet naval air unit in Egypt.

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operated from three airfields—Cairo West, Matruh, and Aswan (see table).

*Reconnaissance Aircraft.* In early 1968, six TU-16 Badger reconnaissance aircraft were deployed to Cairo West Airfield. In 1970, six AN-12 Cub transports

were added to the unit, and subsequently deployed to Matruh Airfield. These TU-16 and AN-12 reconnaissance aircraft were used to monitor US and NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean Sea. The Cub transports also played a role in the training of Egyptian surface-to-air missile crews and provided some logistic support for the Soviet air unit.

*ASW Aircraft.* In late 1968, the Soviet air unit in Egypt gained its first ASW capability when three BE-12 Mail amphibious aircraft were flown to Matruh Airfield. A fourth Mail was added in mid-1970. By mid-1971, the Mail amphibians had been replaced by longer-ranged IL-38 May land-based aircraft. Like the TU-16s at Cairo West, these aircraft were used to reconnoiter US and NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean. They also participated in ASW exercises with ships of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron.

*ASM Strike Support Aircraft.* In early 1970, four TU-16 Badger aircraft

were deployed to Aswan Airfield in southern Egypt. It seems likely, although it cannot be proved, that the Soviets originally envisaged this deployment as the first step in the development of an Egypt-based air-to-surface missile strike capability against the Sixth Fleet. If so, these plans for some reason did not mature, and no Egypt-based ASM patrols were ever conducted by the Soviets over the Mediterranean.\*

AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED TO THE SOVIET NAVAL AVIATION  
UNIT IN EGYPT PRIOR TO MID-1972

| Airfield            | Aircraft type    | Number |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Cairo West Airfield | TU-16 E          | 2      |
|                     | TU-16 K          | 4      |
| Aswan Airfield      | TU-16 G          | 14*    |
|                     | TU-16 E, K, or J | 4      |
| Matruh Airfield     | IL-38            | 6*     |
|                     | AN-12            | 5      |
|                     | AN-12            | 1      |

The Aswan-based TU-16 Gs, although apparently brought to Egypt in 1971 for eventual transfer to Egyptian control, are listed here because they remained part of the Soviet capability in Egypt until they were transferred.



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provided valuable and unique support to the Mediterranean Squadron by reconnoitering US and NATO naval units.

In addition to this reconnaissance function, the Soviets also were building up an Egypt-based naval aviation antisubmarine capability, and at one time appear to have planned to add to this a missile strike unit that could have been used to counter Western aircraft carriers and other high value targets in the Mediterranean. These capabilities, when used in conjunction with missile-equipped ships and submarines in the Mediterranean Squadron, would have become a significant threat to Western naval forces if their development had continued.

#### 4. Operational Significance

By mid-1972, the Soviet naval presence in Egypt was well established. The Soviets had or were in the process of building up several major facilities to support their naval forces in the Mediterranean. Naval air assets based in Egypt gave the Soviets the capability to more easily keep track of US and NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean Sea. The Soviets also appeared to be building up an airborne missile strike capability to support the anticarrier mission of the Soviet Navy.

The Soviet development of a number of ports and anchorages in Egypt made it easier to support and maintain the growing Soviet presence in the Mediterranean. These facilities allowed the Soviets to keep their naval forces on station longer and to build up the size of the force without putting undue strain on the Soviet logistic system. The use of floating bases in Egyptian anchorages and shore-based facilities in Alexandria, Port Said, and Mersa Matruh allowed the Soviets to provide mid-patrol resupply and replenishment to deployed units. The shore facilities also were used to provide maintenance and repair for deployed units. Most of this work appeared to be of a routine nature, however, and ships requiring major repairs still returned to the Soviet Union with the exception of the few F class submarines overhauled in Alexandria.

The gradual buildup of the Soviet naval air unit in Egypt gave the Soviets their first land-based air capability in the Mediterranean. One of the continuing shortcomings of the Soviet Navy has been its lack of adequate air support for its ships operating in distant areas. The Egypt-based aircraft

#### B. Soviet Support to the Egyptian Military

Except for Soviet naval and naval air units, most of the Soviet military personnel in Egypt were advisers engaged in long term training programs until 1970. The massive increase in the Soviet military presence after early 1970 can mostly be broken down into two groups: Soviet combat units directly committed to Egypt's air defense and Soviet support and advisory assistance to the Egyptian air defense, air, naval, and ground forces.

##### 1. Soviet Air Defense Forces

The initial deployment of Soviet combat units to Egypt in early 1970 consisted largely of SA-3 regiments and MIG-21 squadrons, and numbered some 7,450 personnel. This figure rose to some 8,300 by mid-1971 when Soviet SA-6 units were sent to Egypt, and then declined to about 6,600 by mid-1972.

Soviet SAM units apparently were drawn from both PVO Strany—the Soviet strategic defense organization—and from PVO Voysk—the air defense organization of theater forces. The MIG-21 squadrons were drawn from Soviet Frontal Aviation units.

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*Soviet SAM Forces.* Soviet SAM forces [ ]

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[ ] included four SA-3 regiments and an SA-6 brigade. Each SA-3 regiment was composed of a headquarters and from four to seven firing battalions plus organic AAA elements. Soviet SA-3 battalions initially were deployed near Alexandria, Matruh, Cairo, and Aswan to defend key port facilities, industrial areas, and airfields used by the Soviets. These SAM units, along with Soviet fighter aircraft, helped to deter deep penetration raids by Israeli aircraft after March 1970.

The Israelis had by then shifted to attacking Egyptian military installations along the Suez Canal, as the Egyptians were developing an air defense barrier west of the waterway. Included in this barrier were new Soviet SA-3 and Egyptian SA-2 units as well as Soviet and Egyptian fighter aircraft. After a ceasefire agreement with the Israelis was reached on 7 August 1970, the Egyptians began replacing Soviet SA-3 crews along the canal. By March 1971, all Soviet units had departed the canal zone, and many began returning to the USSR. Nevertheless, about half of the estimated 45 SA-3 firing battalions in Egypt were still manned by Soviet personnel as of mid-1972.

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The Soviet SA-6 unit, [ ] which arrived in Egypt in early 1971 deployed to Aswan Airfield. This was the location of a Soviet naval TU-16 ASM unit then being formed. [ ]

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*MIG-21 Units.* The Soviet MIG-21 units which deployed to Egypt in early 1970 consisted of two regimental size elements [ ]

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The units were deployed to protect against Israeli incursions over the interior of Egypt and to defend Alexandria, Cairo, and industrial areas around Hulfan. [ ] three squadrons with about 35 MIG-21s was based at Bani Suwayf and Al Fayyum, and [ ] two squadrons with about 25 aircraft was based at Jiyanklis. On several occasions, Soviet detachments deployed to airfields nearer the canal.

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*Significance of the Soviet Combat Support.* The deployment and operations of the Soviet combat forces in Egypt suggested a two-fold mission: to provide an effective air defense for Egypt while

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the Egyptians strengthened and expanded their own air defense organization, and to safeguard the airfields and port facilities from which the Soviets supported the operations of their Mediterranean fleet. In this they succeeded, first by halting the Israeli deep penetration raids over the interior of Egypt and then by achieving a ceasefire along the Suez Canal.

Soviet pilots and SAM crews apparently operated under guidelines designed to minimize confrontations with the Israelis while still functioning as an effective deterrent force. The Soviets gradually became more aggressive, however, as the air defense umbrella near the canal was strengthened. The Soviets and Israelis clashed in the air only once—at the end of July 1970—and that resulted in the loss of four Soviet MIG-21s with no losses for the Israelis. The Israelis did lose six F-4s and suffered damage to several others during the summer of 1970 as the result of Soviet/Egyptian SAM and AAA defenses.

## 2. Other Soviet Support and Advisory Assistance

Whereas some 6,600 Soviet combat personnel were committed to a direct role in Egypt's air defense by mid-1972, about 5,500 were providing support and advisory assistance to the Egyptian air defense, air, naval, and ground forces. Included in the support and advisory categories were the Soviet MIG-25 Foxbat reconnaissance unit, Soviet maintenance personnel, and advisers assigned to all levels of the Egyptian armed forces.

*Aerial Reconnaissance.* The role of the four Soviet MIG-25 Foxbat aircraft which deployed to Cairo West Airfield in March 1971 was to provide peripheral and overhead reconnaissance of Israeli-held territory. The aircraft operated both along the Suez Canal and over key Israeli military installations in the western Sinai. The intelligence gained from these missions was passed to the Egyptians for their own use. [ ]

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Soviet presence that was virtually unaffected by the order was the Soviet naval access to Egyptian port facilities, although almost all Soviet shore installations were removed.

### *1. Impact of the Egyptian Withdrawal Order*

In issuing his expulsion order, Sadat specifically stated that the mission of Soviet military experts and advisers was terminated, and that all Soviet military equipment and installations which remained in Egypt would become the property of the Egyptians. The resulting Soviet exodus was rapid and complete, and went off with little incident. Soviet equipment was either withdrawn or taken over by the Egyptians, and installations were either dismantled or abandoned.

*Effect on the Soviet Naval Presence.* The major operational impact of the Soviet expulsion from Egypt was the loss of the naval aviation unit, particularly the ASW element, which had been providing support for the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron. This was a valuable but not vital strategic asset to the Soviets. The airfields used by the aviation unit came under full Egyptian control and the unit itself was disbanded. All of the unit's aircraft returned to the USSR, except for ten ASM-equipped Badger Cs which already had been turned over to the Egyptians in February 1972.

In addition, the Soviet-controlled port facility at Mersa Matruh reverted to full Egyptian control, and Soviet shore installations there and at other Egyptian ports were removed or abandoned. Thus, the USSR's apparent attempt to develop a naval base of its own at Mersa Matruh was halted. Such a base would have allowed the Soviets to support their Mediterranean operations on a more direct

[REDACTED]

*Soviet Advisers.* Soviet military advisers played an extremely important role in the Egyptian armed forces between 1970 and mid-1972.

[REDACTED]

In any case, however, the Soviets lacked sufficient influence over the Egyptian armed forces to prevent the Egyptian government from removing the advisers, and there is no evidence that the USSR sought to do so.

### *C. The Decline in the Soviet Presence Since 1972*

The Soviet military position in Egypt thus suffered a dramatic setback on July 17, 1972 when President Sadat ordered the withdrawal of the bulk of the Soviet personnel. Within months, the Soviet combat presence was eliminated, and by late 1972 only about 200 of the Soviet advisers, who were associated primarily with new equipment deliveries, remained in Egypt.\* The principal element of the

\*The number of these advisers in Egypt associated with new deliveries has apparently fluctuated somewhat since 1972. It evidently increased shortly before and during the October 1973 war, primarily in connection with the Soviet resupply effort and the arrival of the Seud, a weapon system unfamiliar to the Egyptians. The adviser total appears to have again decreased thereafter. Besides the remaining advisers, a fluctuating total of some 600-800 other Soviet military personnel have remained in Egypt since the 1972 ouster, in various capacities discussed below.

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basis without having to rely on joint use of Egyptian naval facilities.

Otherwise, however, the ouster of the Soviets did not result in major changes in the Soviet use of Egypt to support their naval operations in the Mediterranean. Egypt reasserted its full control over the port facilities, but Soviet warships in the aftermath of the ouster continued to replenish at Port Said and Alexandria on a regular basis, and the Soviets increased their use of Alexandria for overhauling diesel submarines.

*Soviet Combat and Advisory Support.* Soviet combat support to the Egyptian military was almost totally ended by the expulsion order. The Soviet MIG-21 squadrons and SAM units, including both SA-3s and SA-6s,\* were turned over to the Egyptians. The Foxbat reconnaissance unit temporarily returned to the Soviet Union, and the great majority of maintenance and advisory personnel were withdrawn.

## 2. Current Status of the Soviet Military Presence

The current size of the Soviet military presence in Egypt is estimated to be about 800 to 1,000 personnel. The bulk of this force, some 400 to 500 men, is associated with the continued use of Egyptian port facilities by the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron. Another 100 or so are again maintaining the Soviet Foxbat reconnaissance unit, which returned to Cairo West Airfield in October 1973. The remainder primarily are associated with the headquarters of the Soviet military mission in Cairo or are technical advisers maintaining Soviet military equipment still under warranty.\*\*

*Soviet Use of Port Facilities.* In a speech in early 1974, President Sadat revealed that Soviet access to

Egyptian port facilities is based on a five-year agreement initially concluded in March 1968. Sadat stated that he had renewed the agreement prior to its expiration in 1973, but did not state whether the renewal period also extended for five years.\* At the same time, Sadat said that the Soviets have had no actual military bases in Egypt since July 1972.

The Soviet Navy continues to make regular use of Egyptian ports, primarily Alexandria. Surface combatants and amphibious ships periodically stop at Alexandria for replenishment and minor repairs. Diesel attack submarines continue to be overhauled in El Gabbari Shipyard and have been observed in drydock there. A repair ship, a barracks ship, and some yard craft are stationed in Alexandria where the bulk of the Soviet support personnel are accommodated. Soviet auxiliaries routinely operate out of Alexandria while providing water, provisions, and ammunition to surface combatants in Soviet anchorages off Egypt.

The Soviets continue to use other Egyptian ports to varying degrees. Soviet amphibious ships and a destroyer were moored routinely in Port Said up until the October war, but did not appear to make use of any of the port facilities there, not even the oil storage site leased earlier by the Soviet Navy. Since the October war and the resultant damage to Port Said by Israeli air raids, these ships have shifted to the Matruh anchorage and may periodically use the port itself. The Soviets also continue to use the Sollum anchorage.

The continued Soviet access to Egyptian naval facilities remains a valuable asset to the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron. The Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartus, also used by the Soviet Navy, would offer a partial substitute, but would not serve Soviet needs as adequately, particularly over the near term. Without access to Egyptian ports, it would be difficult to support the current level of naval operations and a heavy strain would be put on the Soviet logistical system. The Soviet submarine force undoubtedly would have to reduce its on-station time

\*\*Existing information permits only very rough approximations in these estimates. It is not definitely known, for example, whether most of the Soviet personnel brought to Egypt in 1973 to train Egyptians in the use of the Scud have since departed, although various indications make this a plausible conjecture. Despite fluctuations in the subcategories, the overall total of 800-1,000 Soviet military personnel in Egypt has probably not greatly changed since 1972.

in the Mediterranean, and a considerably greater level of support would be needed to maintain or increase the surface force. Moscow would have to readjust its naval priorities relative to other areas, or else be satisfied with a reduced naval presence in the Mediterranean.

*Foxbat Reconnaissance Unit.* The Soviet Foxbat unit which again is operating from Cairo West Airfield consists of four aircraft. They presumably returned in order to provide intelligence support to the Egyptians, [REDACTED]

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*Advisory Support.* Soviet advisers no longer have a significant role in support of the Egyptian armed forces, and with the great reduction in Soviet equipment deliveries since late 1973, their numbers may have further diminished.

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### III. PROSPECTS

#### A. The Range of Soviet Military Concerns and Desires

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In addressing the future, there are certain aspects of the current Soviet military rights and presence in Egypt which the Soviet leadership would clearly like to safeguard against existing or potential political threats, and others which it would almost surely like to extend and improve. The degree of importance which the Soviets may attach to these worries and ambitions probably varies from case to case. Hard information is scant, and in no case has it been confirmed that the USSR has recently voiced demands about any of these matters to Egypt. The logic of the Soviet position, however, strongly implies several areas of concern. The most important two are defensive, regarding military rights which the USSR now still enjoys or might be expected to enjoy in Egypt which could be placed in question by a further growth of Soviet-Egyptian tension. The others relate to specific Soviet unsatisfied desires, none of which seems likely to be granted without a fundamental change in the present relationship

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and a major increase in the Egyptian sense of dependence upon the Soviet Union.

#### 1. The Question of Present Soviet Port Rights

On the defensive side, a real Soviet concern exists regarding the present Soviet naval use of Egyptian port facilities. While the USSR, as noted, apparently has a contractual agreement with Egypt for the use of these port facilities, the validity of this agreement, and the continuation of Soviet port rights, have nevertheless frequently been brought into grave question by Sadat as a means of pressuring the USSR to fulfill arms supply agreements. There is strong evidence of the anxiety of Gromyko and other Soviet leaders over the implications of Egyptian threats made in the summer of 1973 and the spring of 1974 to abrogate the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty. In January 1975, Sadat himself publicly voiced such a threat for the first time. These threats are intended by the Egyptians to convey, among other things, a menace to Soviet port rights, and are undoubtedly so interpreted by the Soviets. [REDACTED]

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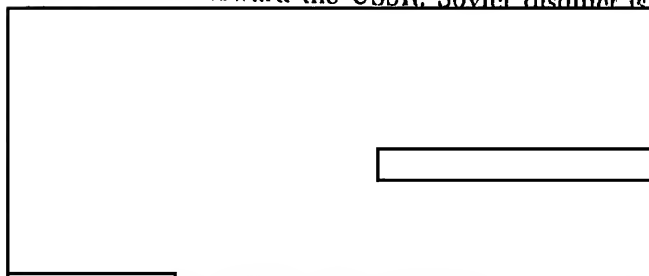
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[REDACTED] The Soviet Navy is thus acutely aware that despite its contract, its use of Egyptian ports remains extremely vulnerable, conditional upon the continued viability of the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty and the general health of the Soviet-Egyptian political relationship, including the degree of Egyptian satisfaction with Soviet arms supply. Soviet naval planners undoubtedly long for an improvement in the relationship with Cairo which would remove this uncertainty.

#### 2. The Conditions of Soviet Canal Passage

There is also some reason to suspect that the Soviets do not take for granted the conditions under which they will exercise future rights of naval passage through the Suez Canal, and that they may have at least some concern over this matter as the opening of the canal draws closer. Such concern would be founded in the first place upon the recur-

rent grave strains in Soviet-Egyptian political relations and the demonstrated unpredictability of Sadat's behavior toward the USSR. Soviet disquiet is



It is likely that the Soviets will wish eventually to test the Egyptian attitude. In December 1974, Admiral Ivliev, Soviet defense attache in Cairo, pointedly queried [redacted] to ascertain whether the condition of the canal would now permit passage of cruisers and destroyers.

The Soviets almost certainly believe that the Egyptian-Soviet relationship would have to deteriorate much further than it has already before Cairo would take the extremely grave step of impeding their passage through a reopened canal. While the USSR may have no reason to expect a further change of this magnitude, the Soviets are aware that there is a whole spectrum of delays and difficulties which Cairo could create, short of outright blocking of Soviet passage. Moscow would therefore probably welcome some explicit Egyptian commitment, preferably in writing. It may be assumed that the Soviets would like prior documentary assurance that Soviet naval units will be permitted to pass readily between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, that Egyptian arrangements and regulations regarding such passage will be fixed and predetermined and not arbitrary or subject to fluctuation, like other Egyptian behavior, with political whim and circumstance, and that these controlling regulations be as little cumbersome and restrictive as possible. Finally the Soviets would of course prefer, but have no reason to expect, Egyptian agreement that Soviet warships will get preferential treatment over those of the United States and NATO.

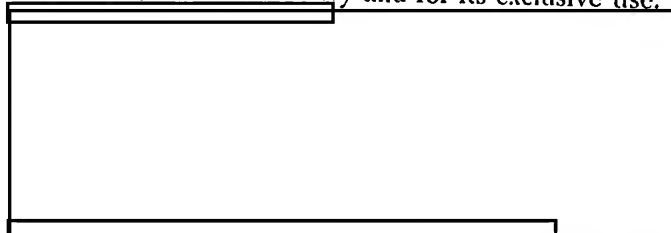
### 3. The Naval Air Unit

Beyond this primary concern to secure their present military rights, it is probable that the Soviets

would very much like restoration of the naval air unit which operated out of Egypt against NATO Mediterranean forces between 1968 and 1972. As stated earlier, this unit had given the Soviets their first land-based air capability in the Mediterranean, and thus had helped fill an important gap represented by the lack of adequate air support for Soviet naval units deployed opposite the Sixth Fleet. Since Sadat's expulsion of the naval air component in the summer of 1972, this gap in land-based support has reappeared and has not been filled. While there is no present evidence that the Soviets have again raised this issue with Cairo, the question of the naval air unit is likely to be near the top of the Soviet list if changing circumstances should ever make Sadat more vulnerable to Soviet demands.

### 4. The Question of "Permanent" Soviet Port Facilities

Despite the evidence suggesting that present Soviet use of Egyptian port facilities is adequate for Soviet purposes, it is likely that the Soviet Navy would prefer to regain the more extensive rights in Egyptian ports which it enjoyed prior to Sadat's 1972 crackdown, particularly the Soviet program to develop Mersa Matruh as a deep water port controlled by the Soviet Navy and for its exclusive use.



[redacted] claimed at about the same time that the Soviets had recently asked Egypt to grant the USSR "permanent" naval facilities at either Mersa Matruh or Alexandria, offering a partial moratorium on the Egyptian debt to the Soviet Union in return. [redacted] the Egyptians refused.

While these allegations are completely unconfirmed, it seems possible that the Soviets are less content with their present port rights, and more anxious to obtain a return to their old rights, than an outsider might think appropriate to their needs.



### 5. The Question of a Red Sea Base 25X1

25X1 It is conceivable but on balance considerably less likely that the Soviets may also still yearn for a naval base on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea.

25X1 [redacted] asserted in the spring of 1972 that the Soviets had broached this subject to Egypt, and had specified the small port of Ras Banas, which they wished to develop into such a base. This request, of course, presumably died a natural death shortly thereafter when Sadat put an end to the Soviet exclusive rights to control Mersa Matruh. It is not impossible that if the political relationship with Egypt were to improve sufficiently, the USSR might revive the issue of Ras Banas, although the Soviet felt need for such a port is likely to diminish with the opening of the Suez Canal and in view of the possibility of obtaining or improving Indian Ocean facilities elsewhere.

### 6. The Question of Returning Soviet Advisers

Finally, a return of many Soviet advisers and experts to Egypt would in itself be a less significant change than those listed above, from the standpoint of Soviet military capabilities against US and NATO forces. It is not certain that the Soviets desire such a return, in view of the problems this aspect of the Soviet presence has created for the USSR in the past. If, as is possible, the Soviets do have such a desire, it is presumably largely for political reasons. Such an influx of Soviet personnel to Egypt might serve to symbolize to the Arab world a partial undoing of the humiliating expulsion of July 1972, which had inflicted major damage to the Soviet political position in the Middle East. At the same time, the Soviets might hope that an enlarged advisory presence in Egypt would improve their leverage on Egyptian policy. For these reasons, Sadat has thus far been adamant in warning the Soviets that he would not accept such additional advisers.

25X1 Since the postponement of Brezhnev's scheduled January 1975 visit to Cairo, there have been press and diplomatic rumors apparently begun by the Egyptians—and one private statement alleged to have been made by Sadat—to the effect that one

of the contributing reasons for the postponement was disagreement over Soviet insistence on returning experts and advisers to Egypt. It is conceivable that the Soviets did raise this issue in the limited context of the experts that might be needed to train Egyptians in the use of certain additional weapons Cairo was seeking from Moscow. This has not been confirmed, however. Sadat has recently acted to quiet speculation on this subject by publicly denying the rumors he had originally set in motion.

### B. Factors Affecting Sadat's Alternative Choices

There is no good evidence at hand to suggest that either an improvement or a further reduction in the Soviet military presence in Egypt is probable in the near future. Sadat is acutely aware of his continued dependence upon Soviet spare parts and other military hardware, and of his need for Soviet support if, despite his wish to the contrary, he should become involved in another conflict with Israel. Sadat also knows that once having played the card of depriving the USSR of its Egyptian port rights, he would lose most of whatever leverage he now has over Soviet policy. Moscow is equally aware of the central importance of Egypt, the largest and strongest Arab state, for the Soviet struggle to retain and expand its influence in the Middle East. The Soviets are also sensitive to the considerable inconvenience that would be imposed on their Mediterranean operations if they were to be deprived of Egyptian port facilities. Both leaderships would therefore appear to have good reason to try to keep their ongoing disagreements from escalating to a point which would endanger the current Soviet military presence.

25X1 Nevertheless, that presence continues to rest upon a highly unstable political base. 25X1

[redacted] tensions in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship have grown from year to year since 1971, that the two leaderships today privately regard each other with profound distrust, and that the oscillations visible in the Egyptian public posture toward the USSR during 1974 could well continue. It is therefore conceivable if somewhat improbable that in the event of another crisis in Soviet-Egyptian relations, possibly induced by

further Soviet reneging on promised arms shipments, Sadat could take sudden action to deny Soviet naval units use of Egyptian ports, despite the Soviet contractual right to such use.

Also possible but presently even more unlikely is the opposite alternative—the emergence of circumstances under which Sadat would agree to an expansion of the Soviet military presence in Egypt. There is strong evidence that Sadat would be most reluctant to do this, and that his preference is in fact to minimize his dependence upon and military association with the Soviet Union insofar as his political needs permit.\*

In this connection, the most important consideration for Sadat is the attitude of the Egyptian military, which is the key factor in Sadat's hold on power. At present, many Egyptian military leaders are most anxious to receive Soviet spare parts and additional weaponry, and would like Sadat to maintain sufficiently good relations with Moscow to

assure such deliveries. However, the evidence is ambiguous as to how high a price most Egyptian military figures would be willing to pay to Moscow. Sadat's ouster of the Soviet experts in 1972 was generally popular in the Egyptian army, and there is no present evidence of a tendency to insist that Sadat grant an increased Soviet presence if this should prove essential to secure Soviet hardware.

The trend of future events—pulling Egypt toward or away from a new round of fighting with Israel—is likely to affect the evolution of Egyptian opinion on how far it will be necessary to propitiate the USSR. There is reason to believe that Sadat's ability to fend off any future Soviet pressures for an increased presence would be further strengthened if a significant additional Israeli Sinai withdrawal could be arranged, and the Suez Canal meanwhile reopened, thus satisfying the most essential Egyptian war aims and increasing Egyptian incentives to attempt to remain out of any future Middle East fighting. On the other hand, Egyptian involvement in a new war would for the time being greatly increase Cairo's dependence on the USSR, particularly if it led to an Egyptian defeat. In the latter event, the Egyptian need for Soviet help could become sufficiently grave to induce Sadat to accept, or indeed, request additional Soviet facilities and forces in Egypt.

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